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A VINDICATION *of the* Freedom *of* Paſtoral Advice:
OR,
A REVIEW *of the indiſpenſible Obligations which the Miniſters of the Goſpel are under,* plainly *to declare the Truth to their Hearers.*

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A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH-CHURCH

OF

NANTWICH,

On SUNDAY, *September* 10th, 1775.

BY JOHN SMITH, A. B.
Rector of the ſaid Pariſh.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES. *John* 5. 39.

NANTWICH:
Printed and ſold by R. TAYLOR and E. SNELSON, for the AUTHOR; ſold likewiſe by S. CROWDER, J. RIVINGTON, *London*; P. BROSTER, *Cheſter*, and by the other Bookſellers in the Principal Towns of the Kingdom.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

GALATIANS Chap. 4. Ver. 16.

Am I therefore become your Enemy, becauſe I tell you the Truth?

HOWEVER valuable Truth may be in itſelf, and deſirable to every real Chriſtian, yet it is always ſure to give Offence to the ignorant and profane, the lukewarm and formal Profeſſors of Chriſtianity. Every faithful Preacher of God's Word, from the Dawn of Revelation has found, and to the End of Time, will find, that this is the Caſe. Indeed, ſince Man is by Nature a fallen and depraved Creature, it cannot

cannot be otherwiſe: *It is impoſſible*, ſays our Lord, *but that Offences will come.* LUKE 17. 1. Light and Darkneſs are not more oppoſite, than *the carnal Mind, which is Enmity againſt God*, and the pure Religion of Jeſus Chriſt. ROM. 8. 7.

From this Contrariety ariſes much of the Oppoſition which we meet with in our Chriſtian Warfare. This Oppoſition, which is the common Lot of Chriſtians in general, is more peculiarly the Portion of the Miniſters of the Goſpel. The Office of the Miniſtry is truly honourable; but, like the Poſt of Honour in Battle, it is attended with peculiar Dangers. Satan and his Emiſſaries are always ready to oppoſe, diſtreſs, and perplex, the faithful Servants of the living God. We have a ſtriking Proof of the Truth of this Obſervation in the Treatment, which the

Prophets

Prophets of old; which Chriſt himſelf and his Apoſtles met with; and particularly, Saint Paul. Hear his own Account of the Difficulties he underwent. *Are they Miniſters of Chriſt*, ſays he, (*I ſpeak as a Fool*) *I am more; in Labours more abundant; in Stripes above Meaſure; in Priſons more frequent; in Deaths oft. Of the Jews five Times received I forty Stripes ſave one. Thrice was I beaten with Rods; once was I ſtoned; thrice I ſuffered Shipwreck; a Night, and a Day, I have been in the Deep; in Journeyings often; in Perils of Water; in Perils of Robbers; in Perils by mine own Country Men; in Perils by the Heathen; in Perils in the City; in Perils in the Wilderneſs; in Perils in the Sea; in Perils among falſe Brethren; in Wearineſs and Painfulneſs; in Watchings often; in Cold and Nakedneſs: Beſides thoſe Things that are without; that which cometh upon me daily; the Care of all the Churches.* 2. Cor. 11. 23 to 29.

What a dreadful Catalogue of Sufferings is here? And yet, under all theſe Difficulties, we find that *the Grace of God was ſufficient for him*; and that *his Strength was made perfect in Weakneſs.* 2 COR. 12. 9. Senſible of this, he tells the Corinthians that he *takes Pleaſure in Infirmities; in Reproaches; in Neceſſities; in Perſecutions; in Diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake.* 2. COR. 12. 10.

Such was the noble and undaunted Spirit of this holy Apoſtle: And, if the Miniſters of the Goſpel would approve Themſelves faithful to their Maſter, they muſt, like him, *boldly* ſpeak the Truth; and *declare* unto their Hearers *all the Counſel of God.* ACTS 20. 27. When Offence is taken at their Freedom; and Oppoſition ariſes in Conſequence thereof; each faithful Servant of Jeſus Chriſt, may, in his own behalf, very fitly and properly put this Queſ-

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tion to his Oppoſers: *Am I therefore become your Enemy, becauſe I tell you the truth?*

From theſe Words, I ſhall take Occaſion to conſider, the various, and *indiſpenſible Obligations*, which the Miniſters of the Goſpel are under, *plainly* to declare the Truth to their Hearers.

Theſe Obligations do ariſe from the Love they bear to God; to their People; and to Themſelves; from the Strictneſs of their Ordination-Vows; and, from their ſolemn Subſcriptions. With Reſpect to the *firſt* of theſe Obligations, *namely*, the Love they bear to God: This is moſt certainly a very lively and active Principle. The Apoſtle, Saint Paul, felt this Divine Energy ſo ſtrong in his own Soul, that he found it impoſſible to reſiſt it. The *Love of Chriſt*, ſays he, *conſtraineth us:* It *bears*

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us a away, * like a ſtrong and reſiſtleſs Torrent, and excites us to all the various Exerciſes of ardent Zeal; Chriſtian Compaſſion; and brotherly Love. Indeed Love for Love is but a reaſonable Return; and it is the conſtant and never-failing Fruit of the Holy Spirit; which preſides in the Breaſt of every true Believer. When this Divine Love is ſhed abroad in the Heart of a Chriſtian Miniſter by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt; when the Eyes of his Underſtanding are enlightened, to ſee his own Vileneſs, and Unworthineſs, (JOB 40. 4.) and the unſpeakable Goodneſs of his God to him, thro' Chriſt: When he beholds the dreadful Depravity of human Nature; and the great Danger Men are in of eternal Miſery: When he ſees the Contempt which is caſt by the

* This is the Import of the Original Word; it is very *emphatical*; and ſuggeſts a noble Simile which few Tranſlations preſerve. See DODDRIDGE's *Family Expoſitor* on 2 Cor. 5. 14. and his Note on Phil. 1. 22.

the Wicked on the glorious God, and his ſacred Laws; the hallowed Flame of celeſtial Zeal will be *kindled*, and *he will ſpeak boldly with his Tongue*. PSA. 39. 34. Under ſuch Circumſtances, he will (in Conformity to the Injunction given by God to the Prophet) *Cry aloud, and ſpare not: He will lift up his Voice like a Trumpet; he will ſhew his People their Tranſgreſſions; and the Houſe of Jacob their Sins*. ISA. 58. 1. If another, who bears the ſame ſacred Commiſſion, will *baſely proſtitute his Office*, and bring Guilt upon his Soul, by *ſpeaking ſmooth Things*, and *propheſying Deceits*; the *true* Servant of God *muſt not, dares not do ſo*. ISA. 30. 10. His Love to his Maſter obliges him to ſtand forth in Defence of his ſacred Cauſe, and to *ſpeak the Truth from his Heart*. PSA. 15. 2. Indeed, if he ſhould act otherwiſe, he would be unfaithful to his God, and treacherous to the Souls of the People com-

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mitted to his Charge. The Apoſtle expreſsly injoins all Paſtors to *take heed unto themſelves; and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made them Overſeers; to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own Blood.* ACTS 20. 28. In Conſequence of this *ſolemn* Charge, every *faithful* Shepherd thinks himſelf obliged to deal *plainly* with his Flock; and, *knowing the Terrors of the Lord*, he earneſtly endeavours *to perſuade Men to flee from the Wrath to come.* 2 COR. 5. 11. MAT. 3. 7.

This is the kindeſt Part he can poſſibly act towards them. Should he ſee a *Fellow-Creature* periſhing for Want of Bread; and, tho' of Ability, refuſe to relieve him, he would *juſtly* incur the Imputation of Inhumanity; but ſmall would be his Guilt, and inconſiderable his Cruelty, if compared with the Conduct of a Paſtor, who ſees his

his People ruſhing forward into the *broad Way that leadeth to Deſtruction*; and yet neglects to admoniſh them *faithfully* of their Danger. MAT. 7. 13. The Sufferings of the Body in this World, will ſoon have an End; but the Sufferings of wicked and impenitent Souls will be *unſpeakable and eternal.*

If your Houſes were in Flames, and you were aſleep; inſenſible of your Danger, and therefore incapable of avoiding it; he muſt be a cruel Wretch indeed, who ſhould refuſe, or neglect to rouſe you *immediately* from your Slumbers. What then would you ſay, or think of the Miniſter, who ſees his People *aſleep*; nay, *even dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*; in the greateſt Danger of *everlaſting Burnings*; and yet lets them ſleep on, and take their Reſt, in Sin and Security? ISA. 33. 14. Certainly

ly you muſt think him, and might juſtly call him, *a cruel Monſter*; and, inſtead of acting like the true Servant of Jeſus Chriſt, he would, by ſuch Behaviour, prove, beyond Diſpute, that he was the Slave of Sin, and the Miniſter of Satan.

The Conduct of a *faithful* Preacher of the Goſpel, is the very Reverſe of all this. He will ſpeak the Truth; *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.* EZEK. 2. 5. He will labour to ſhew you the Depravity of your Nature; the Heinouſneſs of your Sins; and will declare to you *plainly* the *heavy* Vengeance; the *dreadful* Wrath of God, which is your Deſert, on Account of them. He will endeavour *fully* to convince you of the Purity, and Spirituality of God's Law; and the abſolute Impoſſibility, in your fallen State, of a ſtrict Conformity thereto; or, of

Juſtification

Juſtification thereby. GAL. 3. 10. He will *throughly* probe your Wounds in order to their Cure; being clearly convinced, that there is no other Way to bring you as *Sinners*, weary and *heavy laden* to your ſpiritual Phyſician; *to the great Shepherd and Biſhop of your Souls.* MATT. 11. 28. 1 PET. 2. 25.

All this, and (if poſſible) more than this will he endeavour to do; not, becauſe he hates you; not, becauſe he takes Pleaſure in giving you Pain by declaring the awful Threatenings of God againſt Sin; but becauſe he has a true and real Love for your Souls: And therefore he *ſtrives, and labours; wiſhes, and prays, that you may be happy both here and hereafter.* And is he for this to be hated, and oppoſed; derided, and ſet at Nought? Ungrateful Return indeed! Be this as it may: He is fully determined, however, thro'

the Power of God, to perſevere in the Path of Duty; to return good for Evil; Bleſſings for Curſes; and Benefits for Wrongs. In ſo doing, he imitates the Example of his ever-bleſſed Maſter, who *went about doing Good.* ACTS 10. 38.

When he looks into the ſacred Volume, he ſees that Perſecution has ever been the Lot of God's faithful Servants; and therefore he is not much ſurpriſed, as if a new Thing had happened unto him; neither is he depreſſed, and dejected, on this Account. He finds a Variety of comfortable Promiſes in the Word of God; and theſe are the Stay, and Support of his Soul. Thus ſaith the Almighty to his faithful Servant: *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right Hand of*

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my Righteouſneſs. ISA. 41. 10. *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee. So that he may boldly ſay, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear, what Man ſhall do unto me.* HEB. 13. 5. 6. *Bleſſed are ye,* ſays the Redeemer, *when Men ſhall revile you; and perſecute you; and ſhall ſay all Manner of Evil againſt you falſely, for my ſake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for, great is your Reward in Heaven; for, ſo perſecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* MAT. 5. 11. 12. Indeed, the Apoſtle aſſures us, that *All who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer Perſecution;* (2 TIM. 3. 12.) and, that *We muſt thro' much Tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God.* ACTS 14. 22. Heaven however, will make the *real* Chriſtian ample Amends for all; and, *theſe light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, will work out for him, a far more exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory.* 2 COR. 4. 17.

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Of this Happineſs, and of this Glory, the Miniſter of Chriſt is *earneſtly* deſirous that all his People ſhould partake. This is utterly impoſſible whilſt they continue in their Sins; and therefore, out of the Love he bears them, he *faithfully and plainly* warns them of their Danger.

And indeed, if it were poſſible that he could be deſtitute of a real Love to God, and a true Concern for the Souls of his People, (which never was, never can be the Caſe,) yet, is he indiſpenſibly obliged to *ſay the Truth in Chriſt, and* to *lie not*, if he has any, even the leaſt Regard, for his own Salvation. ROM. 9. 1. Hear the *ſolemn* Charge which God gives him by the Mouth of his Prophet EZEKIEL. In the third Chapter of this Prophecy (which I deſire you will *ſeriouſly* read in your Retirements) at the 17th and 18th

18th Verſes, you may find theſe awful Words. *Son of Man, I have made thee a Watch-Man unto the Houſe of Iſrael: therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me. When I ſay unto the Wicked thou ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the Wicked for his wicked Way, to ſave his Life; the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thine Hand.* Obſerve *attentively* this awful Paſſage. The Miniſter of God is here call'd, *a Watch-Man:* He is appointed by Chriſt to the perpetual Care of his Church; to look after the ſpiritual Welfare of his People, with Attention and Diligence; to foreſee Dangers, in Order to prevent them; and to promote in every Way, their eternal Salvation. An Office this, of the greateſt Importance! Thus the Almighty proceeds: *Therefore hear the Word at my Mouth; and give them warn-*

ing from me: that is; be diligent in Prayer for ſpiritual Knowledge; and in reading the Holy Scripture, which is my Word; and, according to the Tenor of this ſacred Revelation, warn them to forſake their Sins, and to return unto me their God and Saviour. *When I ſay unto the wicked thou ſhalt ſurely die;* that is; thou ſhalt periſh in thy Sins, if thou dieſt in them; and thou giveſt him not *warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave his Life; the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his Iniquity;* that is; he ſhall die in a State of Sin, and be condemned to thoſe eternal Puniſhments, to which Death tranſlates Sinners: *But his Blood will I require at thine Hand:* Thou ſhalt be accountable for the Loſs of his Soul; juſt as a Man's Blood is laid to the Charge of him, that is in any Reſpect, acceſſary to his Death. *

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* See LOWTH's *Commentary* Page 261.

It is this awful Denunciation, which is again repeated in the 33d Chapter,* (joined with the Love that he bears to Chriſt, and his Church) that conſtraineth him to declare the dreadful Threatenings of the Almighty *plainly, and without Reſerve*; and unleſs he does ſo, great is his Guilt; and inſupportable will be his Puniſhment. If the Prophet ſhould *propheſy falſely, and ſpeak unto you Peace, when there is no Peace*; he would wretchedly and cruelly deceive you: (JER. 6. 14.) You then muſt periſh in your Sins; but he would be ſubject at leaſt to a double Portion of infernal Torments.

This will be evident, if we briefly conſider his Ordination-Vows, which indiſpenſibly

* See likewiſe the 56th Chapter of *Iſaiah*; the 5th, 6th, and 23d Chapters of *Jeremiah*; the 2d, 13th and 24th of *Ezekiel*; in which (together with various other Paſſages in Scripture) the Guilt and Danger of unfaithful Paſtors, and their Flocks, are deſcribed in the moſt awful, and affecting Manner.

indiſpenſibly oblige him to all Fidelility, and Diligence.† The firſt Queſtion that is put to each Candidate for Holy Orders, in the Office of Deacons, is this: Do you truſt that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghoſt, to take upon you this Office and Miniſtration, to ſerve God, for the promoting of his Glory, and the edifying of his People? To which he anſwers, *I truſt ſo.* In the Office of ordaining Prieſts, there is *a moſt ſolemn Charge* given to them. They are required to have always printed in their Remembrance how great a Treaſure is committed to their Charge: The Church and Congregation whom they muſt ſerve, is Chriſt's Spouſe and Body. The Greatneſs of the Fault of their Negligence, and the horrible Puniſhment that will follow upon it is

† See the Offices for making and ordaining Prieſts and Deacons.

is then ſet before them, in Caſe the Church, or any Member of it, take any Hurt, or Hinderance, by Reaſon thereof: They are moreover charged never to ceaſe their Labour, Care, and Diligence, till they have done *all that lieth in them*, according to their *bounden Duty*, towards all ſuch as are, or ſhall be committed to their Care, to bring them to a Ripeneſs and Perfectneſs of Age in Chriſt. They are again urged to conſider with what Care and Study they ought to apply themſelves to this; to pray earneſtly for God's Holy Spirit, and to be ſtudious in reading, and learning of the Scriptures; and to forſake and ſet aſide, as much as they may, *all worldly Cares and Studies*. It is hoped, that they have clearly determined, by God's Grace, to give themſelves *wholly* to this Vocation; and, as much as lieth in them, to apply themſelves *wholly* to this one

Thing; to draw all their Cares and Studies this Way; and that by their daily reading, and weighing the Scriptures, they will ſtudy to wax riper, and ſtronger in their Miniſtry. Theſe are ſome of the Words of the preparatory Charge given by the Biſhop, when he enters on the Office of ordaining Prieſts; the whole of which is ſo ſerious, and ſo ſolemn; that no Addreſs can be more ſo. After this truly *pathetic, and weighty Charge*, the Biſhop proceeds *in the Name of God, and of his Church*, to put the following Queſtions to each Candidate for the ſacred Order of Prieſthood. Do you think in your Heart that you be truly called, according to the Will of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Order of this Church of England, to the Order and Miniſtry of Prieſthood? To which Queſtion the Candidate replies, *I think it.* The Biſhop then aſks, Are you perſuaded,

ed, that the Holy Scriptures contain ſufficiently all Doctrine required of Neceſſity for eternal Salvation, thro' Faith in Jeſus Chriſt? And are you determined, out of the ſaid Scriptures to inſtruct the People committed to your Charge; and to teach Nothing (as required of Neceſſity to eternal Salvation) but that which you ſhall be perſuaded may be concluded, and proved by the Scripture? The Candidate anſwers, *I am ſo perſuaded, and have ſo determined, by God's Grace.* The Biſhop proceeds thus: Will you then give your faithful Diligence, always ſo to miniſter the Doctrine, and Sacraments, and the Diſcipline of Chriſt, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the ſame, according to the Commandments of God; ſo that you may teach the People committed to your Cure and Charge, with all Diligence to

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keep, and obſerve the ſame? The Candidate anſwers, *I will ſo do, by the Help of the Lord.* The Biſhop then aſks, Will you be ready, *with all faithful Diligence,* to baniſh and drive away all erroneous and ſtrange Doctrines, contrary to God's Word; and *to uſe both public and private Monitions, and Exhortations, as well to the Sick, as to the Whole, within your Cures, as Need ſhall require, and Occaſion ſhall be given?* The Candidate anſwers, *I will, the Lord being my Helper.* The Biſhop then aſks, Will you be diligent in Prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in ſuch Studies, as help to the Knowledge of the ſame, laying aſide the Study of the World, and the Fleſh? The Candidate anſwers, *I will endeavour myſelf ſo to do, the Lord being my Helper.* The Biſhop then puts this Queſtion, Will you be diligent to frame and faſhion your own ſelves,

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and your Families, according to the Doctrine of Chriſt; and to make both yourſelves, and them, as much as in you lieth, wholeſome Examples and Patterns to the Flock of Chriſt? The Anſwer is, *I will apply myſelf thereto, the Lord being my Helper.* The Biſhop then aſks, Will you maintain and ſet forward, as much as lieth in you, Quietneſs, Peace, and Love, among all Chriſtian People, and eſpecially among them that are, or ſhall be committed to your Charge? The Candidate replies; *I will ſo do, the Lord being my Helper.*

After this the Biſhop prays that God, who hath given the Candidate the Will to do all theſe Things, may alſo grant unto him Strength, and Power to perform the ſame; that he may accompliſh his Work, which he hath begun in him, thro' Jeſus Chriſt

our Lord. Then the Congregation ſhall be deſired ſecretly in their Prayers, to make their humble Supplications to God, for all theſe Things: For which Prayers, Silence is to be kept for a Seaſon.

The Biſhop then prays again, in Behalf of the Candidates, and their reſpective Flocks; and, when this Prayer is ended, he, with the Prieſts preſent, ſhall proceed to lay their Hands ſeverally upon the Head of every one that receiveth the Order of Prieſthood; the Receivers humbly kneeling upon their Knees, and the Biſhop ſaying, *Receive the Holy Ghoſt for the Office and Work of a Prieſt, in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Impoſition of our Hands. Whoſe Sins thou doeſt forgive, they are forgiven; and whoſe Sins thou doeſt retain, they are retained; and be thou a faithful Diſpenſer of the Word of God,*

God, and of his Holy Sacraments; in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt. Amen. Then the Biſhop delivers to every one of them, kneeling, the Bible into his Hand, ſaying, *Take thou Authority to preach the Word of God, and to miniſter the Holy Sacraments in the Congregation, where thou ſhalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.*

When this is done, the Nicene Creed is repeated, and the Biſhop proceeds in the Communion Service, which all they who receive Orders take together. Beſides this, each Candidate ſubſcribes * to the Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and Homilies of the Church, as entirely agreeable *to the Word of God:* And to theſe I beg leave to refer you.

You

* This Subſcription is to be made, *Ex Animo*; that is; from the *very Soul* of the Subſcriber.

You may clearly ſee then the ſtrong, the ſolemn, the indiſpenſible Obligations, which every Miniſter of the Goſpel is under, to deal *plainly* with his Hearers. *He muſt preach the Word; be inſtant in Seaſon, and out of Seaſon: He muſt reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all Long-ſuffering and Doctrine.* 2. TIM. 4. 2. He is bound to do ſo, by the Love he bears to God, to Chriſt, and his Church; and by the Regard he has for the Welfare of his own immortal Soul. *Yea, Wo be unto him, if he preacheth not the Goſpel.* 1. COR. 9. 16. And if theſe Things are ſo; I muſt obſerve that the Oppoſition which is given to ſuch faithful Servants of Jeſus Chriſt, is *truly impious.*

For, is it not impious to oppoſe the Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt; and, in ſo doing, even *to fight againſt God?* ACTS 5. 39. How *highly* would an earthly Monarch

Monarch reſent an Indignity offered to his Ambaſſador? Much greater Reaſon then have we to expect, that Jeſus Chriſt, who is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords,* (REV. 19. 16.) will avenge the Cauſe of his Ambaſſadors; and put them to Confuſion that hate them? Hear this awful Declaration; *Vengeance is mine; I will repay ſaith the Lord.* ROM. 12. 19.

Indeed, the Oppoſition which is given to the Miniſters of Chriſt, is not only very impious, but it is likewiſe *highly unreaſonable.* Is it not *unreaſonable* to cenſure and blame them for their conſcientious Regard to Truth? Certainly it is; and ungrateful too; ſince they are *earneſtly* deſirous that *the Truth ſhould make you free* from the Bondage of Sin and Satan, and lead you to the Fruition *of Pleaſures for evermore.* JOHN 8. 32. PSA. 16. 11.

If the Truth be galling to an impenitent Sinner, (as it always muſt and will) let him turn his Reſentment *inwards*, where alone it can do good; and, if he will be offended, let him be offended at himſelf, for his Immoralities; and at his Sins, as the Bane of all true Happineſs. In the 23d Chapter of JER. at the 28th Verſe, the Almighty gives this ſolemn Injunction: *The Prophet that hath my Word let him ſpeak my Word faithfully.* This you ſee is the bounden Duty of every Miniſter of the Goſpel.

But alas! the Time is come when Men *will not endure ſound Doctrine; they have itching Ears; they turn away their Ears from the Truth; and are turned unto Fables.* 2. TIM. 4: 3. 4. The Guilt however of ſuch Perſons is very great; and their Condition truly dangerous. Conſult the 30th Chapter of ISA. and

you

you will find the following Words: *Wo to the rebellious Children, ſaith the Lord, that will not hear the Law of the Lord; which ſay to the Seers, ſee not; and to the Prophets, propheſy not unto us right Things; ſpeak unto us ſmooth Things; propheſy Deceits: Get you out of the Way; turn aſide out of the Path; cauſe the Holy One of Iſrael to ceaſe before us.* Such in Effect is the Language at this Day, of all the profane, careleſs, and formal Profeſſors of Chriſtianity; and ſhall the Servants of Chriſt lull them in their carnal Security, join in the Deceit, and flatter them with the Hopes of Safety? God forbid!

We are the *Miniſters of Chriſt*; (2. Cor. 11. 23.) we are to labour in his Vineyard; to ſhew Men *plainly* their ſpiritual Wants; to endeavour to relieve them by leading them to their All-ſufficient Saviour; in whom they have

have Redemption thro' his Blood; and thro' whom, they may be fully reconciled to their offended God.

We are Paſtors of Chriſt's Flock; (EPH. 4. 11.) it is our Duty therefore *diligently* to ſuperintend our Charge; to endeavour to rouſe the impenitent; to cheriſh the weak; to bring back thoſe that go aſtray; to direct them to proper Paſtures; and to guard againſt the ſeveral Dangers to which they are expoſed in this frail State, from the Allurements of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil.

We are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt; (2. COR. 5. 20.) ſent by our Divine Maſter out of infinite Grace, to a loſt World; to ſhew Men their Guilt and Danger; to explain to them his benevolent Purpoſes; to urge them to accept his Offers of Pardon, Grace, and Glory; and

and to receive to a State of Reconciliation, ſuch as are willing to return unto God thro' him.

We are Stewards of the Myſteries of God: (1. Cor. 4. 1.) We are to take Care of Chriſt's Family; to diſpenſe to them all ſpiritual Bleſſings; to impart his Inſtructions; to feed them with the Bread of Life; and to prepare and diſpoſe them for the Reception of their bleſſed Lord, at the great and awful Day of his ſecond coming.

Such are the figurative Repreſentations, given in the Word of God, of the Office and Duty of his Miniſters.* Struck with a deep Senſe of the Dignity and Importance of the Miniſterial Character, and of his own natural Weakneſs, and Infirmities, the inſpired Apoſtle Saint Paul, makes this hum-

* See Biſhop Conybeare's Charge to his Clergy of the Dioceſe of *Briſtol*, delivered at his primary Viſitation, *July*, 1752.

ble Inquiry: *Who is ſufficient for theſe Things?*

And if he, with all the Plenitude of Inſpiration, with all the Accompliſhments of Science, and Powers of Oratory, was ſtill fearful and apprehenſive of ill Succeſs; what then are Miniſters in general? What then am I, who am in all theſe Reſpects ſo vaſtly inferior to him? *To him, whoſe Shoes Latchet I am not worthy to unlooſe.* MARK 1. 7.

But, my Brethren, weak and unworthy as I am, I can truly ſay, that *my Heart's Deſire, and Prayer to God for you all is, that you may be ſaved.* ROM. 10. 11. It is the ardent Wiſh of my Soul, God is Witneſs! that you may be happy, both here, and hereafter. This Happineſs you cannot poſſibly obtain, whilſt you continue in your Sins, and are at Enmity with your God. *There is no Peace, ſaith my God, to the Wicked.* ISA. 57. 21.

Truly

Truly ſenſible of this, and longing for yourSalvation; *ſuffer, I intreat you, the Word of Exhortation:* HEB. 13. 22. Bear with my Plainneſs; and, as I intend it for your good, think me not *your Enemy, becauſe I tell you the Truth.* If I am earneſt, and importunate, *is there not a Cauſe?* 1. SAM. 17. 29. Certainly there is: Your Salvation, and my own eternal Happineſs are nearly concern'd: Nay, they do evidently depend on the Truth and Reception of that ſacred Goſpel, which it is my bounden Duty *plainly*, and, (if it may be) *forcibly* to preach unto you. For theſe Reaſons then, I muſt not, I dare not *corrupt the Word of God, nor handle it deceitfully.* 2. COR. 2. 17. 2. COR. 4. 2. *It is required in Stewards that a Man be found faithful;* and, if I ſhould flatter you in your Sins, your Guilt will ſtill remain; and God will *ſeverely* puniſh me for my Inſincerity. 1. COR. 4. 2.

I am reſolved therefore, by the Grace of God, *faithfully* to warn you of your Danger, that you may flee from it; ſo that if you do periſh, (which God forbid!) I may be *pure, and clean from your Blood.* ACTS 20. 26.

It will be the Lot of many Chriſtian Miniſters, (God grant that it may not be mine!) to be called forth, at the Day of Judgment, as Witneſſes againſt their own People: I muſt *give account* for the preaching of God's Word; and you muſt aſſuredly anſwer for the hearing of it. HEB. 13. 17.

It is highly neceſſary therefore to remind you, that if any of you ſtill continue to *make a Mock at Sin, and caſt God's Word behind you;* if you wilfully ſhut your Eyes againſt the Light; and perſevere in the Paths of Error; you will finally have Reaſon to curſe the

the Day of your Birth, and even the ſolemn Seaſons of Devotion, in which I have endeavoured, *I truſt faithfully*, (tho' weakly and imperfectly it muſt be confeſſed) to declare unto you the Word, and Will of God. PROV. 14. 9. PSA. 50. 17.

I intreat you therefore for God's Sake; for your Redeemer's Sake; and for the Sake of your own immortal Souls, to bring every Doctrine I deliver to you, to the Teſt of Scripture; and examine diligently whether it be agreeable to the Word of God.* This

* That you may be enabled to do this more effectually, I would recommend it to you, when you come to Church, always to bring your Bibles with you. This Cuſtom may be attended with many Advantages: You may then go along with me whilſt I read the Leſſons, which will be a likely Way to fix your Attention *more ſteadily* to the Word of God. When I ſhall proceed to deliver the Sermon, I intend, frequently to name the particular Chapters and Verſes, where you may find the Scripture-Proofs, which, from Time to Time, I may have Occaſion to introduce. I deſire you will look for them as often as you can; and, that you may have Time to do ſo, I intend ſometimes to pauſe for a few Moments. When you ſhall ſee,

is the only Criterion of Divine Truths: Men may err, but God cannot deceive. Examine *carefully* all I ſay to you by this unerring Rule. Have recourſe *to the Law, and to the Teſtimony.* Isa. 8. 20. If the Doctrines I deliver are found to be agreeable thereto, *cordially* receive them; if otherwiſe, *totally* reject them.

Chriſt is your Lord and Maſter; follow no Man further than he follows Chriſt. If you are at any Time in Doubt whether I ſpeak the Truth; and are deſirous of conſulting me about your ſpiritual Concerns, come to me; or, if you chooſe it rather, I will

ſee, (as I truſt you will) the Doctrines I preach *clearly* eſtabliſh'd on the Authority of God's Word, I am inclined to hope, thro' the Divine Bleſſing, that they will be *cordially received, and duly obſerved.* You may likewiſe double down the Paſſages referred to; which Paſſages I requeſt you will, every Sunday Evening, *ſeriouſly* review in your Retirements, and read over to your Families: By theſe Means you will be enabled, (if you diligently pray for Grace) to profit by every Diſcourſe; and you will *be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own ſelves.* James 1. 22.

will come to you; and faithfully endeavour to remove all your Scruples; and give you full Satisfaction.

Believe me, I have no wiſh to miſlead you: I have no ſuch horrible Deſign; I have no Intereſt in deceiving you: *I ſeek not your's, but you.* 2. Cor. 12. 14. It will give me the greateſt Pleaſure to impart ſpiritual Truths to you; and to ſee you truly anxious and earneſt about the Care of your Souls.

If your Bodies are diſeaſed, you will *ſpeedily* apply to a Phyſician; but, alas! when your Souls are ſick of Sin, and in the greateſt Danger of eternal Miſery, many of you are careleſs, and unconcerned about them.

I beſeech you therefore to trifle no longer with God, and your own Souls:

Reſt

Reſt no more in *a Form of Godlineſs*, whilſt, at the ſame Time, you are entirely deſtitute of *the Power of it.* 2. TIM. 3. 5. Thouſands, nay, Millions are thus deceived; ſatisfied with a Round of lifeleſs and unmeaning Duties; *truſting in themſelves*, (inſtead of Chriſt) *that they are Righteous, and deſpiſing others.* LUKE 18. 9.

But remember, my Brethren, that *God ſeeth not as Man ſeeth.* Specious Appearances may deceive Men; but God looketh *on the Heart.* 1. SAM. 16. 7.

If therefore you deſire to be ſaved, you muſt *come unto;* that is, you muſt *believe in Jeſus Chriſt:* You muſt come to him as *Sinners; weary, and heavy laden* with the Burden of your Sins. MAT. 11. 28. You muſt pray diligently for the Grace of God; and then *ſearch the Scriptures*, that you may ſee, that you may

may know, and feel your loſt Condition, and that you are in Deed, and in Truth, *wretched, miſerable Sinners.* JOHN 5. 39.

When this Conviction is truly wrought in your Souls, you will then *earneſtly* apply to Chriſt; you will renounce every *Refuge of Lies; and truſt in Chriſt; and in him alone,* for a full, free, and compleat Salvation. ISA. 28. 17. Then you *will go forth* to your ſpiritual Duties, not truſting in your own Strength, (which is but Weakneſs) but *in the Strength of the Lord your God; and will make mention,* not of your own, but *of his Righteouſneſs,* and of his *only.* PSA. 71. 16. Remember that *Chriſt, is of God made unto us Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification, and Redemption.* 1. COR. 1. 30. *Wiſdom,* to enlighten our dark underſtandings; *Righteouſneſs,* to juſtify our guilty Perſons; *Sanctification,*

to renew our depraved Nature; *Redemption*, to make us happy, both here, and hereafter. These are ineſtimable Bleſſings; invaluable Privileges; and theſe Bleſſings, and theſe Privileges are *all freely* offer'd to you, and to the *chief* of Sinners, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Look therefore unto your great Redeemer, *and be ye ſaved, all the Ends of the Earth; for he is God, and there is no Saviour beſides him.* Isa. 45. 22. *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and you ſhall be ſaved.* Acts 16. 31. His Mercy will pardon you; his Power will protect you; his *Blood will cleanſe* you *from all* your *Sins*; his Grace will make you *clean Hearts*, and will *renew a right Spirit within you*, and you will become *new Men*, and true Chriſtians. John 1. 7. Psa. 51. 10. Then will you experience more ſolid Comfort, and real

real Satisfaction in one Day, than you ever knew before in the whole Courſe of your Lives. You will poſſeſs that Peace of God, which paſſeth all Underſtanding; a Peace, which this vain World can neither give, nor take away. You will find that the Ways of Wiſdom are truly *Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and that all her Paths are Peace.* PRO. 3. 17. *Be faithful therefore unto Death; and Chriſt will give you a Crown of Life.* REV: 2. 10.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, &c. &c. &c. Amen.

ERRATUM.

Page 17 Line 8, inſtead of *for* read *from.*

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